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Special Report: Key Issues from the UAPI Continental Security Conference

Stanley Supinski, Phillip Treglia, Donna Cayson, and Jeffrey Burkett

“He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils”
Sir Francis Bacon

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The University and Agency Partnership Initiative (UAPI) of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security conducted its first ever Continental Security Conference (CSC) on December 7/8, 2010 in Colorado Springs. The event brought together participants from Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and focused on common security issues of interest to all three nations with an emphasis on academic perspectives and contributions. This report provides background, a summary of the proceedings, and proposes a way ahead for this initiative.

The genesis of the conference stems from the expansion of the UAPI into the international arena.¹ In late 2009, the UAPI reached across the border to Canada in an effort to learn of their academic programs, better inform our comparative homeland security courses, and offer Canadian programs the academic support provided to UAPI partners domestically.² After that visit, a decision was made to reach out to Mexico as well, through a conference that brought together academics, practitioners, and policymakers from the three countries that share the North American continent.

The goals coming in to the CSC were straightforward. First was to develop knowledge and educate the participants on security issues and academic efforts as undertaken in each country. Second was to build relationships between the participants and to begin institutionalizing those relations between their organizations. Once the conference began, an additional goal was added: to generate a concrete list of objectives for future conferences.

Attending the conference were representatives from academia, including two

from Mexico, four from Canada, and nine from the U.S. military.³ The Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Public Safety Canada (PSC) were among the organizations representing the practitioner community. A complete list of organizations represented at the conference is in appendix A.

Despite the participant nations' proximity to each other and the nature of today's natural and manmade threat environment, few long-term initiatives of this type exist. None of these has a primarily academic focus.⁴

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The conference began with a keynote address by Ambassador Andres Rozental, the former Mexican ambassador to the United Kingdom and founding president of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations. The address focused on several key areas: shared security threats, increased cooperation, criminality, and cultural differences.

The events of 9/11 were seen by many as an opportunity to redefine the relationship between the countries on the North American continent. Both formal and informal discussions were conducted at the secretary of state level regarding a “security perimeter” that included the entire continent. However, the issue of sovereignty, particularly for Canada, was one of several issues that precluded making much progress in this area. Another issue then, as now, is the security threat posed by undocumented people in all three countries.

There has been gradual but significant change during the past decade that has increased security cooperation, particularly between Mexico and the U.S. Evidence of

these changes includes visits by secretaries of defense; a “sea change” in sharing of intelligence and law enforcement information; and an increase in formal and informal exchanges (having five representatives from Mexico attending this conference is one example of these exchanges). Mexico’s formal liaison with the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) is also strong evidence of increased cooperation and improved relations.

The U.S./Mexican border continues to pose significant issues. The border, stated Ambassador Rosental, is “insecure, criminal, and dysfunctional, and on the Mexican side is an inconsistent structure to deal with it.” An effort to identify the issues and propose potential solutions was undertaken jointly via a task force (which Ambassador Rosental co-chaired) consisting of representatives from the Pacific Council on International Policy and Consejo Mexicano de Asuntos Internacionales A.C (COMEXI). The report from this task force, *Managing the United States-Mexico Border: Cooperative Solutions to Common Challenges*, focuses on making the border friendlier, more secure, and conducive to increased trade. It includes recommendations for a trusted traveler program, pre-clearance procedures for both goods and travelers, proposals for furthering security cooperation, and development of more crossings and infrastructure. The report has become a key document for political leadership in both countries.

Transnational crime has always been an issue, but with the tremendous level of growth in the recent past, it has become a serious threat to North American security. The overwhelming majority of crime is drug related, and production, transport, and usage pose a threat to all three nations. There is a sense that too little emphasis has been given to the problem of drug use and demand. There is also general consensus that the transnational crime threat is currently the greatest security issue.

Despite improvements in relations, Ambassador Rosental pointed out, “we still don’t know each other well enough; there remain gaps in knowledge, perceptions, and we clearly don’t understand each other’s cultures.” Knowledge gaps result in a lack of trust, and this has been amplified with

Mexico because of corruption issues. Portrayal in the media of a Mexican “culture of criminality” has hindered moving forward.

Changes in political administrations have also been a factor in making progress in terms of relations and security, the Ambassador concluded; new administrations take trust backwards temporarily, so it is important to institutionalize relationships at the operational levels.

The remainder of the conference focused on three issues or questions: (1) what is continental security, (2) does continental security matter, and (3) how can academia contribute to this issue? These areas were provided as starting points only. Each major issue discussion began with a primer, provided by selected attendees, and was followed by a plenary discussion. Then each question was discussed in breakout groups, and each group included attendees from each nation. Following are overviews of the discussions surrounding the topic in both plenary and breakout sessions. Essays from selected primer presenters are included in the appendices.

WHAT IS CONTINENTAL SECURITY?

The first presenter, Rodrigo Nieto Gómez, pointed out that borders mean many things and the first, essential, step to consider in “continental” security is to make explicit some of the differences in how the countries involved in this discussion filter and represent objective facts. A summary of his comments can be found in his essay “What is Continental Security? Avoiding Getting Lost in Translation,” in Appendix B.

The second presenter was David McIntyre of the National Graduate School. McIntyre suggested, “Continental Security is North American unity in promoting systemic, sustainable, well-being of national power in the face of national attack.” His presentation highlighted talking points of incentives and “words that matter.” This was instrumental in understanding that “attacks” required a response and that focusing on external attacks would miss some of the internal problems and the commonality for each country. By disassociating specific issues such as immigration or smuggling, a

framework for cooperation can be established and advanced without the baggage of existing issues/competing interests that hinder meaningful holistic progress.

Discussions of the question “what is continental security” focused on several major themes.

First was the concept that three nations combined and collaborating would obtain improved results over individual efforts against security concerns with transnational consequences. While the threats were deemed to vary somewhat between nations, common concerns include these major categories (listed without ranking or priority): pandemics, natural or manmade disasters (such as the earthquakes or the Deep Horizon oil spill), terrorism, transnational illegal trafficking operations (drugs, weapons, people, or money), Weapons of Mass Destruction, global warming/climate change/environmental issues, non-state entities operating within each country, and cyber attacks. Additional areas of concern were threats to critical infrastructure (i.e. electrical systems), financial systems and economics, immigration, farming/food security, and water resources and rights issues. The threat posed by the recent H1N1 virus provided an ideal case for study: analyzing how it was handled by each nation, including what was done well and not so well, could provide insight into improving cooperation and learning from each others’ respective lessons. It was generally agreed that the number one issue confronting all three nations is organized crime.

Second, participants agreed that North American security must be grounded in shared interests. It was generally agreed that the agenda driving shared interests has been focused more on preventing terrorist attacks and largely driven by U.S. concerns. There was overwhelming consensus that terrorism should perhaps be replaced as the driving factor for promoting security cooperation. Instead, focusing on the positive benefits of cooperation may be a more useful approach to moving the agenda forward because it has more relevancy/impact on individual citizens (i.e. economic impact) and has universal political appeal. It was noted that only thirteen U.S. citizens have died from terrorist

acts since 9/11, yet hundreds of thousands have died from automobile accidents and heart disease.

The third point of agreement was that actors other than governments also define continental security. For example, the medical community’s reaction to H1N1 transcended all three borders and provided the basis for the public health response, which in turn was supported by each nation. It is important to recognize the influence of the medical community in defining the threat, advising government, and responding. Incentives are critical in creating an accepted definition for continental security. In addition to it being important to those policymakers of each nation that are ultimately responsible for carrying out security related activity, the private sector benefits must be addressed as well.

Finally, defining continental security is complicated by the fact that a concept of a North American identity does not exist. The absence of a political and cultural identity challenges widespread acceptance of the continental security concept because nationalism and sovereignty arguments prevail. Until there is a focus on interdependencies – such as energy, agricultural and economic production – a common identity will be lacking and the imperative to secure that collective identity will be absent.

In summarizing this session, Ambassador Rozental pointed out that spending excessive time on defining terms is wasteful; focusing on processes to improve conditions for security is more valuable. Furthermore, the goals of gaining knowledge about the subject matter and connecting with fellow colleagues and professionals far outweigh any working definitions this workshop could create.

DOES CONTINENTAL SECURITY MATTER?

The primers for this discussion were provided by Pamela Matthews (Public Safety Canada) and David Schanzer (Duke University). Matthews provided background on Public Safety Canada and suggested that, from her perspective, the key issues for developing the continental agenda are driven by:

- The interconnectedness of economies; the U.S.-Mexican-Canadian marketplace is among the largest in the world, with billions flowing across borders everyday;
- Shared interests in preventing criminal activity (drugs, human trafficking, weapons smuggling, etc.), terrorism, and radicalization;
- Public safety matters, including emergency management along shared borders;
- Infrastructure matters: food supplies, electrical grid, transportation, communications, etc.;
- Geography, proximity, and shared airspace/over flight concerns;
- Common governmental obligations to protect citizens' safety and well-being; the value placed on democratic principles and maintaining free/open societies; and not improving security at the expense of liberty and privacy.

Schanzer, whose essay "Continental Security – A Skeptic's View," is available in Appendix C, briefed that the threshold should be high for a continental security agenda because governments are already stressed and only limited additional efforts can be supported. Any new paradigm must consider potential value and include only issues that impact and benefit all three partners, arise from the geographic proximity, and consider the positive and negative aspects of large scale economic integration.

Much of the discussion surrounding the question "does continental security matter?" revolved around Matthew's and Schanzer's advocacy for a new paradigm that focuses on issues of mutual benefit, shared values, and increased economic prosperity. The participants agreed that continental security should feature a privileged relationship – where each nation benefits more than others outside the group would – similar to the concept behind NAFTA. Progress on such an agenda would serve to build trust, increase the ability to solve crises, and keep lines of communication open. Operationally, such an undertaking must be politically and popularly

acceptable; it must show that it will improve upon the status quo; the "low hanging fruit" should be the first attempted; timelines for showing success must be reasonable; and efforts must fall within acceptable human rights policies and legal parameters. Finally, the group felt that emergency management and humanitarian efforts of the recent past might provide good models for cooperation, particularly in light of experiences in the Caribbean and following Hurricane Katrina.

Participants generally concurred that it is more critical in today's security environment to address mutual cooperation. Foreign relations have changed since the end of the cold war; there is an increase in the scope and volume of trade; and there is both greater interconnectivity and shared infrastructure, which mandate renewed attention. Additionally, existing policy and programs are moving too slowly or are not working.

Moving an agenda forward will require an overarching set of guiding principles all three nations can use to shape domestic policy; it cannot be dominated and driven solely by U.S. interests. Such guidelines will help synchronize national strategies and make it easier for leaders to sell initiatives to their domestic populations, particularly in Canada and Mexico. Overarching strategies and the requisite political endorsements have been missing in the past, which has led to some ineffective multinational programs, waste, and frustration. Examples of this, and further reason to support this mutual effort, are the spillover effect of trade and the corruption of the Mexican government. It was agreed that Mexico's government must be reformed in order to move forward with a trilateral agreement as externalities such as corruption, pandemics, and drugs radiate outward and have an effect on the entire continent. In this context, it would be best to look at what is already being done: port and airport security, movement of goods, and response to pandemics were identified as three areas that clearly fit.

Stephane Roussel (University of Quebec) asked "how do we face a major crisis without closing the borders?" Participants agreed that managing issues without doing so is critical as such closures adversely affect the economy. Any event that impacts all three countries must be examined case by case,

issue by issue, while at the same time keeping a broad view, which a continental security effort could clearly help frame in advance.

In summary, there was strong agreement a continental effort is important and how it is framed is crucial. Synergies would result from such an effort. An incremental approach that moves forward with a unity of vision would be best; not having such an effort could clearly hamper cross-border issues.

HOW CAN ACADEMIA CONTRIBUTE TO THIS EFFORT?

Academia has a long tradition of helping government solve its most complex problems. North American security is no exception, yet to date the intellectual capacity of Canada, Mexico, and the United States has not been fully energized toward solving our common challenges.

The first primer addressing this question, delivered by Roussel, focused on what academia is “good and not good at.” He suggested that academia can be a tremendous resource because it excels in several key areas such as documenting data, conducting fundamental research and comparative analysis, providing historical examples, testing and evaluation, and identifying options. Academia can also reach across borders and be instrumental in developing a transnational lexicon that could help frame multilateral discourse. Conversely, what academia is not good at is making predictions, making decisions, and implementing policy.

The second primer, “What Contributions Can Academics Make to Continental Security?” was provided by Harold Trinkunas (Naval Postgraduate School) and is summarized in Appendix D. His overview of what academics can do was highlighted by the notion of nurturing hemispheric research by shaping panel discussions at relevant professional conferences and sponsoring research. He further suggested that this forum should determine how to identify common research topics, what models are best suited to sustain research, which networks need to be engaged, and who should support and sponsor multilateral multiagency efforts.

The participants concurred that the focus of academia should be restricted to what it is best at, particularly education of both policy makers and the public, research, and how to draw lessons from past historical data and operational experience. Academics can help frame the strategic communications message by helping the state department, minister of foreign affairs, and other government organizations. Broadening the network of stakeholders and extending the discussion will create momentum and the imperative for action.⁵

There are some potential negatives to using academia. Ambassador Rozental estimated that – despite the contributions academics can make – only roughly ten percent of policy makers are interested in or open to outside views; this may account for why academia has not been engaged in the past. Preservation of academic independence is also an issue; maintaining objectivity during the examination of highly politicized issues, such as immigration policy, is vital to providing apolitical and sound recommendations. Furthermore, academia generally does not work quickly, as analytic research is time consuming; it requires clear objectives, which government often fails to provide; and there must be a commitment of resources. In all cases, expectation management is essential for all stakeholders.

The fundamental issues in most government to academia relationships involve the lack of a “common language,” poor expectation management, an absence of established networks, limited access to information and people, and a misunderstanding of academic incentives. For academic involvement to be effective, projects should be managed at the lowest level possible to encourage realistic and practical recommendations and findings. Nevertheless, even with the expected benefit, RADM Ortega (Mexican Navy) commented: “The Mexican government does not use the academic community” and conveyed that they would be unlikely to do so in the future.

CLOSING COMMENTS AND THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE

The closing group's consensus was that academia has much to offer in strengthening Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. security and cooperation. The following items were proposed as a starting point for moving the Canadian-U.S.-Mexican security agenda for academia forward.

- Per Ambassador Rozental's suggestion, revise the Continental Security Conference name to "Canada-US-Mexico: Our New Common Security Agenda."
- Disseminate, share, and improve access to cooperative efforts, including the use of social media to expand the discussion and reach more participants.
- Clearly define the goals of this group and consider formalizing its propose with a statement of principles.
- Broaden the network; consider who might be missing from the discussions.
- Establish a Center of Excellence for the study of Canadian-U.S.-Mexican security that is apolitical and non-partisan, can reach out to other institutions to collaborate on research agendas, will explore multinational funding sources to encourage dialogue, will encourage hemispheric issue research and publication, and can network with and support interested stakeholders.

Closing comments by Ambassador Rozental best summarize key points of the conference. He saw this as "an extraordinary event that brought together an impressive group of people with a broad variety of backgrounds, and as a genuine learning experience." The contributions academia can make to our joint security are great, particularly with its ability to think outside of the box and to look beyond the horizon. As we move forward, we must ensure that we consider security in other areas, such as those that affect our economies. We must also ensure that our trilateral shield should not interrupt bilateral efforts, but focus on those areas where three is better than two. As the three largest nations sharing the North American continent, we can only benefit by

using the concept of "privileged" relations to improve our overall security.

Finally, perhaps the best summary of the importance of this event, and the need to continue such a dialog, was made by Ambassador Rozental to this author in a private comment: In the event of a natural or manmade disaster, the best thing our three nations can do is "close ranks, not close borders."

About the Authors

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Philip Treglia, USMC, is currently assigned to USNORTHCOM in the J3/Domestic Operations (DOMOPS) directorate. He has participated in numerous National Special Security Events (NSSE) and Joint Task Forces (JTF). LtCol Treglia received a master degree in national security, homeland security and defense, from the Naval Postgraduate School in 2010.

Donna Cayson recently retired from law enforcement in California, where she spent much of her career working in volunteer coordination. Sergeant Cayson holds master degrees in security studies (Naval Postgraduate School) and behavioral science. In 2010, she served as the CHDS distinguished Fellow assigned to the FEMA National Preparedness Directorate.

Jeffrey Burkett is a Colonel with the Ohio Air National Guard and a graduate of the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security. He has served as the division chief of plans in the Canadian-U.S. Bi-National Planning Group, National Guard advisor at NORTHCOM, and as the division chief of nuclear, cyberspace, and space operations at the National Guard Bureau.

¹ The Initiative has as its mission to expand and support U.S. based homeland security education and training programs. The UAPI has supported program development in all fifty states, and has hosted dozens of conferences and workshops, including the Annual Homeland Defense and Security Education Summit held in the National Capital Region each spring. Program support includes development of comparative homeland security courses – those which look at how security is conducted in other nations and learning of best practices, procedures, and lessons learned.

² The visit to Ottawa included the University of Ottawa, Carleton University, and the policy office of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

³ Representatives were present from the Mexican Navy, the North American Aerospace Defense Command/U.S. Northern Command, as well as from military schools, including the National Defense University.

⁴ The World Affairs Council has conducted an annual North American Forum, which brings together key thought leaders to interact for the “mutually reinforcing goals of security, prosperity and enhanced quality of life.” (http://www.itsyourworld.org/wac/North_American_Forum.asp) The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America was created in 2005 to conduct regional dialog on security and economic issues, and it also included Canada, Mexico and the U.S. (See M. Villereal and J. Lake, J., (2009) *Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America: An Overview and Selected Issues*, Congressional Research Service, 2009.) This effort was initiated by the leaders of the three countries at that time (Paul Martin, Vicente Fox, and George Bush), but did not continue with their successors; the Partnership ceased to be active after August 2009. (See Pacific Council on International Relations, “*Managing the United States - Mexico Border: Cooperative Solutions to Common Problems*,” 2009.) Several trilateral agreements exist, most notably the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as numerous bilateral accords, but none of which institutionalize regular gatherings to discuss security issues and the perspective of academia and its potential contribution.

⁵ Several ideas emerged to improve this forum in the future such as holding the next conference in Mexico or Canada, co-authoring papers within the working group, providing a historical perspective at the next event, and establishing a wiki site to encourage dialogue.

APPENDIX A

Continental Security Conference Participating Individuals/Organizations

Mexico:

Andres Rozental, Former Mexican Ambassador to the United Kingdom
Mexican Navy
University of Guadalajara
College de la Frontera

Canada:

Carleton University, Ottawa
Conference Board Canada
University of Quebec, Montreal
University of Dalhousie
Public Safety – Canada
Justice Institute of British Columbia

United States:

FEMA International
Department of Homeland Security
Naval Postgraduate School, National Security Affairs Department
Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Homeland Defense and Security
University of North Carolina, Charlotte
U.S. Army War College
U.S. Northern Command J5
U.S. Northern Command J7
U.S. Northern Command Interagency Coordination
National Defense University, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies
National Graduate School
Long Island University
Colorado College
Duke University
Defense Threat Reduction Agency
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

APPENDIX B

What is Continental Security? Avoiding Getting Lost in Translation

Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez

It is tempting to conclude that thinking about continental security only requires from us that we move our vantage point one step higher, articulating the “continental dimension” to the national, regional, and local scales.

The reality is more complicated than that. Borders represent many things. They certainly are artificial or natural lines in the territory that demarcate the point where jurisdictions, constitutions, and authorities change. Michel Foucher describes the borders as “territorial discontinuities that highlight political divisions. In that sense, they are legal institutions, negotiated or imposed, established by political decisions, and governed by the law.”¹

Nevertheless, they also possess an aspirational and imagined function that transcends their important institutional nature. They are the containers of geopolitical representations that give to the people who live inside those territories a series of lenses and discursive frameworks that can be and often are unique to them, creating different or “alternate” realities and priorities vis-à-vis the same “transborder” facts.

Therefore, borders are also the place where public discourse changes, sometimes radically. As a consequence, the first essential step to consider, including a continental scale for security issues in North America, is to make explicit some of the most important differences in the way North American national subjective agendas filter and represent objective facts. Only then will we be able to “localize” the national interests and priorities of the three nations into something each nation can understand using its own lens. Otherwise, the concept of continental security might “get lost in translation.”

I propose here a series of exploratory interrogations to guide us in this quest. Finding some of their multiple answers would allow us to - if I might continue using the idiomatic metaphor - carve our own trilateral Rosetta Stone for security issues, decoding the multiple meanings that Americans, Canadians and Mexicans attribute to the same facts.

This list of questions is by no means exhaustive, and more could be included as these are answered. Nevertheless, they seemed to me a good starting point to begin a continuous and emergent conversation.

1. Is there a real need for a continental or North American security framework? Why?
2. Can a truly cooperative North American security framework even exist, given the enormous disparities in the size and scale of interests between the United States, the only current global superpower, and Mexico and Canada?
3. Can we talk about a continental scale for security in North America today, or are we being fooled by two bilateral security relations that sometimes pose as a trilateral one: The Canadian-American relationship (defined by the strong bonds that were forged thanks to NORAD) and the weaker narcotized relationship between the U.S. and Mexico, with both relations pivoting around the United States and with little practical contact between Canada and Mexico?
4. Is it valid to talk about a North American security framework, if there are no North American security institutions?
5. Is the harmonization of internal policies, laws, and regulations a sufficient response to North American security threats, or should the North American nations move towards a more formal and binding security treaty? Is this even conceivable or will their respective public opinions stop any such a process?

6. Is North American security a hegemonic construct put together by the United States to impose its definitions of security to the whole continent? Or is it the opposite: a framework that helps sensitize the global superpower to the problems, threats, and vulnerabilities of its own world region?
7. A core element of the geopolitics of both “internal” border zones of North America is the presence of a few highly active points of entry that measure just a few miles, surrounded by large unpopulated zones where governance is scarce and situational awareness hard to obtain and expensive to keep. Can the three nations produce the necessary agreements and assume the necessary costs to protect those key empty territories and bring governance to them?
8. Furthermore, is it in the best interest of the three North American nations to do this, or will competing agendas and objectives make it a zero sum scenario? (E.g., border security between Mexico and the U.S. would affect immigration dynamics, putting pressure on Mexican policymakers.)
9. Supranational regions are geopolitical representations themselves. Where does North America stop? Can a regional security policy be built without the inclusion of the Central American and Caribbean nations? If not, wouldn’t that make the concept of North American security redundant or unnecessary, in light of this rediscovered version of pan-Americanism?
10. How do the three nations deal with the “elephants in the room” of the prior relationships? Can American and Mexican stakeholders overcome their historical mistrust of one another? Can Canada deal with Mexico as an equal partner at the trilateral level without losing its special relationship with the U.S., and without seeing that relationship “Mexicanized”? What other kinds of reciprocal mistrusts are out there, waiting to hinder any coordinated efforts?
11. What is the role of American homeland security in shaping North American security interests, and should Mexico and Canada accept the fundamental objectives of this policy (e.g., critical infrastructure protection, border security, resilience, and an all-hazard approach to threats) as the unavoidable starting points for their own domestic security policies? Do they have to?
12. What other issues are important for Mexico and Canada, and are not currently part of the respective American bilateral agenda with these nations? Should any of those be considered to be part of a North American security framework?

Most of these questions have more than one answer and none is intrinsically correct or false. What is important from the point of view of implementing an effective continental security policy is to identify which of those different answers have clear national cleavages and biases, thereby dealing with policy “*faux-amis*” in a way that inserts empathy as a core element of the dialogue.

Ambiguity and uncertainty are not the same. Nikolaos Zahariadis rightly observes that while “ambiguity refers to a state of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances or phenomena. ... [and it] may be thought as ambivalence, ... uncertainty may be referred to as ignorance or imprecision. Although more information may (or not) reduce uncertainty, more information does not reduce ambiguity.”² Therefore, ambiguity will always be part of any continental security framework, as many of the answers to the questions presented earlier do not have a definitive “objective” answer. However, information about the distinct frameworks and lenses used by the three nations of the continent would certainly reduce the level of uncertainty, creating a more manageable negotiation environment for the three administrations.

Not all conflictive issues have to be resolved at once, but conflict where it may exist should at least be understood, to avoid what has probably been the most common pitfall in the North American security dialogue: Getting lost in bad national discourse’s translations.

About the Author

Rodrigo Nieto-Gómez is a research professor in national security affairs and at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. His fields of research include border security, the policy making process, the implications of new technologies for security and defense policies, and the geopolitical and strategic effects of homeland security/defense and national security with a regional focus on North America. Dr. Nieto-Gómez obtained his PhD (summa cum laude) in geopolitics at the Institut Français de Géopolitique of the University of Paris, from where he also holds a master's degree in the same field. He also holds a Mexican J.D. from the State University of San Luis Potosí, specializing in international public and private law inside the NAFTA region.

¹ Michel Foucher, *L'Obsession des Frontières*, translated from French by the author (Paris: Perrin, 2007).

² N. Zahariadis, *Ambiguity and Choice in Public Policy. Political Decision Making in Modern Democracies* [Kindle version, 2003].

APPENDIX C

Continental Security – A Skeptic's View

David H. Schanzer

“Continental Security” can be a useful concept only if it is narrowly defined to encompass exclusively issues where there is a shared security concern between the United States, Canada, and Mexico that can be concretely addressed through joint action. There are already a plethora of multi-lateral forums in which both physical and economic security matters can be addressed – the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and NAFTA to name a few, and we have robust bi-lateral relationships through which many issues can be addressed. We should not further burden government officials with another institutional framework that must be supported with staff, regular meetings, and the like unless we can articulate a precise purpose for the new institution that is not currently being met. Canadians do not have a core interest in the problem of Mexican migration through the Arizona desert. Mexicans need not be involved in discussions about shipping lanes through the Arctic. Both are security issues. Both have a geographical dimension. But neither should be the subject, to my mind, of continental security.

The types of security issues that might benefit from a trilateral, continental security framework are those that (1) substantially affect all three nations, (2) arise from our geographic proximity, and (3) require coordinated action by all three nations to address effectively.

There are a number of issues that do rise to this level.

The crisis created by cross-continental drug trafficking and the violence that spins out from it is the prime candidate for a continental security dialogue. Drugs are transported across both borders and continued violence and instability in Mexico caused by the prevalence of highly organized and dangerous cartels could threaten long-term economic integration of the three countries. Counter-narcotics efforts could be enhanced by an institution dedicated to developing and implementing a consistent, coordinated strategy to deal with the complexities of the problem from both the supply and demand sides. Regular high level meetings and staffing will help to sustain the focus, attention, and resources that this problem deserves.

Response to pandemic disease is also a critical issue that could benefit from coordinated activity between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The SARS and H1N1 outbreaks demonstrate that a problem in any one of these countries quickly and inevitably becomes a serious problem for all the others. There is a need for common public health protocols, health screening procedures at the borders, and sharing of expertise and information. A continental stockpile of antibiotics and vaccines that could be drawn upon to attempt to isolate an outbreak at its early stages should also be considered. Perhaps the most important subject of the security dialogue on this issue would be to develop a common communications plan, so that leaders from all three countries are delivering a consistent message to all inhabitants of the continent to reduce fear and explain the elements of the response.

Preparedness for and response to catastrophic natural disasters could benefit from a continental security framework. This could include planning for how to deal with cross-border infrastructure failures, such as if energy supplies are disrupted by disasters or even a terrorist attack. Developing a means to quickly deploy response capabilities from the other countries to the site of the disaster should be a core topic of planning activities.

Defining continental security to include immigration and border security policy is unwise and would have the likely effect of undercutting support for the entire concept. The question of the disparity between the way the United States handles immigration and border security issues between the Mexico and Canada is a hot button political issue. Placing this matter under a continental security umbrella will be perceived by the U.S. domestic audience as a ruse to liberalize security policy with respect to the Mexican border. Consequently, it is a political non-starter.

It is also difficult to see how counterterrorism could benefit from a continental security institutional framework. Information exchange is taking place through intelligence service to intelligence service. Muslim radicalization is not an issue in Mexico, but it is in the United States and Canada. Fears about the Mexican border being a conduit for al Qaeda terrorists have been over-hyped. For these reasons, it is difficult to make the case that a continental dialogue on terrorism is necessary or would be useful.

The one terrorism related issue that could benefit from continental treatment is cargo and supply chain security. Clearly, goods crossing the Mexican border can transit right through the United States and into Canada. It simply makes no sense for the same goods to face a different set of security requirements when they cross the Mexico-U.S. border as they do when they travel into Canada. Harmonization of driver identification requirements and screening procedures makes a great deal of sense. Ideally, this should happen through the NAFTA process, but perhaps a multi-agency forum like the envisioned continental security apparatus could make more substantial progress than what has occurred to date.

Since 9/11, there has been a tendency to make every issue a security issue, mistake procedural reform for substantive resolution of issues, and pretend that new bureaucracies will be more effective than old ones. Eight years into the experiment of creating the Department of Homeland Security and six years after formation of the Director of National Intelligence, the jury is still out on whether these innovations have improved the problems they were designed to solve. I am therefore a skeptic about adding to the international institutions that are already present to deal with the challenges of our post-9/11 world unless there is a compelling case to be made for them.

My suggestion for those advocating for continental security is to start slowly, perhaps identifying a single issue that can be managed through a continental security framework. Counter-narcotics is the obvious choice. If, after a period of years, the parties believe a continental approach has made a valuable contribution to this topic, then the scope of matters dealt with through this framework can be expanded. If not, it can be easily discarded. Until this is applied on a small scale to see if it is useful, legislation to create a new continental security bureaucracy, with high level meetings, staff, office buildings, and the like should be put on hold.

About the Author

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APPENDIX D

What Contributions Can Academics Make to Continental Security?

Harold A. Trinkunas

What can academics contribute to continental security? North American continental security is an awkward concept from both an academic and a policy perspective. In the traditional academic disciplines concerned with the study of national and international security, there is not a strong tradition of studying the North American continent as a security issue in and of itself. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the security threats to the countries that share North America were either perceived to have originated far from their homelands or were issues of domestic security. For example, since the 1940s the United States and Canada have shared a security identity, but it is one that is centered on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and focused largely on the defense of Europe (at least until the end of the Cold War). Mexico, on the other hand, has not shared a security identity with other North American states for well-established historical and political reasons that have not faded with the increase of U.S. concern over international terrorism since 9/11, the trafficking of illicit goods, and cross-border migration. As a result, policy-makers (many of them educated in the same disciplines as the academics studying international security) have not found a broad body of knowledge, research, or policy recommendations in the academic community dealing with North American security. This can change if steps are taken to foster the emergence of a community of experts that leverage existing strengths in the academic study of security to develop the kind of knowledge that is common (and helpful) when it comes to the study of other regions and security problems.

Academic disciplines are not good at providing short-fused responses to the most pressing issues crowding the inboxes of policy makers. This is not the time horizon on which basic or even policy-relevant research occurs. However, what academics can do is provide frameworks for the systematic analysis of problems and evaluation of proposed policy responses. Given enough time, this can provide the policy community with tools that define both the problem set and the range of useful solutions, sorting through the rush of initial responses to a problem to figure out what works best. Similarly, academics, in so far as they may not be vested in the preferred policy option of any particular government agency, have more latitude to think outside the box and avoid the self-reinforcing echo chamber that sometimes stifles debate in the policy world. Finally, once a body of knowledge develops around a problem set, such as North American security, academics can provide the education and capacity building that the policy community needs to bring its new members up to speed in preparing to deal with emerging threats.

The benefits of academic study of North American security are unlikely to arise spontaneously from the normal workings of universities and think tanks. To focus academics on a new problem and get them working on building new knowledge requires new resources. The most obvious of these is funding to support research and build capacity in the academic community. For example, when the United States government realized that it needed more researchers with critical language and culture skills after the Cold War, it created the National Security Education Program in 1991 to support academics and professionals focused on the regions and countries of interest for U.S. national security. The other thing the policy community can do to support the generation of new knowledge is provide access. The participants in the policy making process are vital sources of information about emerging issues, obstacles, and possible solutions to North American security. This information is grist for the mill of academic research. Academic exchanges, discussions with academics, participation in conferences all provide venues where the two communities can communicate easily.

We need to keep in mind that the natural (and hoped for) consequence of the academic process is publishing research results. Here, the policy community can be supportive by keeping

an open mind about the kinds of publications that matter to academics, typically those that appear in peer reviewed journals and publications in their disciplines. While a technical report may be more useful to someone in government, attracting the interest of leading academics to a specific problem set means not only funding research but also supporting its publication in open sources rather than allowing it to be strangled by pre-publication review. After all, these publications, even those that are critical of the policy community, attract attention from the academic world for the issues associated with continental security, and this new area for research will only benefit from a focus by more experts.

Policymakers can also get the best support from academics by offering them the opportunity to make a difference, not only by developing new knowledge but also by developing capacity and expertise. Students are the lifeblood of academic communities, and they carry the analytic mindset with them into jobs in the policy community. By supporting education on North American security, the policy community will attract the attention of academics to this emerging issue, if only by generating a student-based demand signal.

However, academics also have much work to do in fostering a community of interest in North American security. This involves listening carefully to the problems that those in government and in the policy community have identified. It means communicating results effectively, especially to research sponsors. It also means genuinely engaging the subject matter of continental security rather than merely repurposing new funding or education opportunities as a mechanism for supporting existing research agendas. Finally, it means creating avenues for new entrants into the study of continental security to get up to speed. The Summer Workshop on Military Operations and Strategy, hosted by Cornell University every year, was started in 1997 as a means for senior academics and policy practitioners to attract and support the interest of graduate students and junior academics in military affairs. It has since evolved into an organization with a life of its own that keeps the academic research agenda on this subject moving forward through participation in yearly workshops and conferences. This model may provide a way to bring the study of continental security into greater focus and attract more attention for it from scholars and practitioners of security.

About the Author

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